

had taken the ground. He exhibited a drawing of the north side at the Royal Academy, in 1826, and others in 1827-28. In 1833, he was called before the Select Committee appointed "to consider the possibility of making the House of Commons more commodious and less unwholesome," with various other architects (Soane, Smirke, E. Blore, Wyattville, Bartino, Allen, Hopper, Deering, Goodwin, and Savage), and submitted a model and plan for a new House of Commons. In 1835, Mr. Basevi submitted a design for the Fitzwilliam Museum, at Cambridge, in competition. Thirty sets were sent in, and, on the 28th of December, at a meeting held in the Senate House, four designs were selected, of which his was one. Each member of the senate then gave a single vote for one of the four, and Mr. Basevi's plan obtained the majority of votes. This building, which is but just completed, must be regarded as Mr. Basevi's chief work, and entitles him to a high rank as a classic architect. The Conservative Club-house, executed by him, in conjunction with Mr. Sydney Smirke, and but recently completed, has further served to establish him in public opinion.

To Gothic architecture it does not seem that Mr. Basevi has paid much attention; a little church (St. Saviour's), near Haas Place, Chelsea, designed by him in that style, has little to recommend it. This structure is on land belonging to the trustees of Smith's charity, for whom Mr. Basevi acted as architect. Pelham Crescent, Sydney Place, the new part of Brompton Crescent, and several other ranges of buildings on the same estate at Brompton (mostly carried out by the energy and enterprise of Mr. Bonnio, builder of that place), were designed by Mr. Basevi, as was also Thurler Square, on adjoining land belonging to Mr. Alexander.

He was a good draughtsman and had a cultivated mind. In his manners, Mr. Basevi was cold and somewhat haughty; he was however scrupulously just, as between his employer and the tradesman, and though the latter might never find affability or kind words, they were certain that no undue advantage would be taken or meanness practised.

Mr. Basevi was a member of the Institute of Architects from its foundation, and once filled the office of vice-president, but never contributed to its transactions. He was also a fellow of the Royal Society, and the Society of Antiquaries; he was elected to the former on May 11, 1843. His father is still living, and he leaves a widow and eight children to deplore a great loss. Cut off hastily, at a moment when he was about taking a much higher place in public opinion than he had previously held, and when as he thought things looked most smiling, the death of our contemporary should induce in us reflection, and lead us to consider in what we can amend.

#### HISTORICAL PAINTING.

SIR,—Among many interesting articles in *THE BUILDER* of the 11th inst., I have been particularly pleased with that headed "An Effort to Advance Historical Art." Though probably the production of a disappointed fresco candidate, it is written with a moderation and temper that claim respect, and it is very much to the purpose at a moment when the fine arts fix so much of the attention of an intelligent public, and their capability of co-operating efficiently in the civilizing progress of national education, has become a leading question.

The writer of that paper is, perhaps, not aware that a proposal nearly resembling his own, was about the year 1838, entertained by the Central Education Society. A committee was appointed to consider in what way the fine arts would best assist the objects of the society; it comprised Messrs. Hawes and Wyse, both members of the present Royal Commission on the Fine Arts; Mr. W. S. O'Brien and the society's secretary, the late Mr. Duppa. They invited several artists to advise and co-operate with them. The proposed plan was a pictorial history of England with tabular statistics of the condition of the people and the progress of civilization, law, and freedom, with an account of inventions or improvements

by importation, &c. Mr. Walters, the publisher, was present at the meetings, to suggest or receive hints as to the mode of publication.

The discussion of the plan of the work and of the practicability and expenses of the work were very satisfactory. But the whole was suspended, in consequence of one member of the committee, who had not attended that discussion, proposing other subjects to his colleagues of a less national character. The death of Mr. Duppa subsequently led to the extinction of the society and most of its useful projects. Fortunately, Mr. Knight's publication (on a somewhat different plan and vastly more extended and costly), begun about the same time, shows the necessity there was for drawing the people's attention to the history of their country; and the exhibition of cartoons in 1843 at Westminster Hall, tested and proved the taste of a British public for historical compositions.

I need not at present trouble you with all the details of the plan above alluded to, but will endeavour to apply to your correspondent's proposal, such modifications as experience indicates as practical and suited to the success of the enterprise, and to the educational wants of the people.

As to the merits of the subject proposed, all who have any experience must approve it, and I quite agree with your intelligent correspondent that the objections to costume and other technicalities, contained in the Third Report of the Royal Commission, are insignificant, the difficulty of overcoming them being very slight to artists skilful in composition and well informed of the varieties in each period. His proposal to invite criticism and advice from antiquaries, poets, historians, anatomists, &c. is highly commendable. Such a course would enlighten the artists and save them much trouble and uncertainty; it would also accustom men of science to the charms and capabilities of the arts; it would help to bring about that connection between knowledge and sentiment that ought surely to form the basis of historical art. Under such auspices, the history of our country, in a language impressive to the sight and feelings of all men, could not fail to be successful in its appeal to the public. The exhibition should be made to attract vast multitudes; that would be the best advertisement for the publication of engravings with historical explanation.

The *Boydell Illustration of Shakespeare*, and *Bowyer's History of England* shew that a vast outlay may be more than replaced by such an undertaking. They are beacons to direct us, and so have been in recent times the annuals and art-unions. The vast improvements in antiquarian knowledge and in every department of science collateral to the painter's art, give to the artists of the present day immense advantages over the unassisted talent of the time of Boydell and Bowyer.

The practice of cartoons has already drawn out some of the qualities in which British artists were considered most deficient. A continuation of that practice can alone confirm their talent for composition, drawing, and other essentials in high art. Fresco painting will help to wean them from conventional effects, homy tones, and too much reliance on meretricious qualities, injurious to simple paths and refined perception.

Agreeing so far in all the principles connected with your correspondent's plan, I question the practicability or desirableness of one or two of his proposals. 1st. How far is it advisable to produce cartoons and frescos of the dimensions proposed, i.e. from 16 to 22 feet, for an exhibition of two or three months, and for the especial purpose of engravings of as many inches? This might be all very well if easily attainable, but the demand on the artists' exertions and expenses, the difficulty of exhibition, the necessity of calling for help from Government, and that of destroying the frescos, however fine some might be, are insuperable objections which would be felt and urged if such a proposal were made by the Royal Commission, and remain so under any circumstances before us. Why not limit the cartoons to half proportion?—figures of three feet and a half or four feet:—and frescos of one or two figures, life size, or half figures of colossal proportions, with studies of heads and hands similar to the splendid cartoon studies of Raphael, or of Leonardo da Vinci, would cer-

tainly suffice. To follow their example rather than that of Louis Philippe may save us from the perils to which the persequer would have exposed Yorick's wig. By this prudent modification, instead of 400 feet of wall, 200 would be sufficient, and that quantity is forty times more procurable. What the people of England and good taste require is not acres of painted walls, but subjects, character, action, expression; in fact, well told stories.

A WARM ADMIRER OF HISTORICAL PAINTING.

#### THE SCHOOL OF DESIGN, MANCHESTER; AND PROPOSED MUSEUM OF ART.

SOME five or six years ago, at the meeting for the establishment of the School of Design, we recollect, that an extensive museum of art was one of the most important objects, contemplated by the projectors. It was to include works of interest in every branch of art and science, and to be open freely to all persons. It is, therefore, no new project, and has only been delayed through the comparatively slender patronage and success of the school, during the first years of its existence. But, under the present efficient management, the school promises soon to exercise the influence, demanded from the intimate connection between manufactures and art, and it has already made a great advance in resources and importance. Much of the credit for this flourishing state is due to the council, and more especially to their active honorary secretary, Mr. George Jackson. He has laboured long and zealously to aid the infusion of taste in decorative art, was one of the earliest promoters of the school, and is unquestionably a very fit person for the important office he holds. In a paper "On the Means of Improving Public Taste," printed last year, Mr. Jackson has urged the importance of cultivating the industrial arts, and of preserving the connection between ornamental and fine art. He says, "the false notions that exist in the public mind, as to what constitutes or may be considered as art, may be assigned as one cause of its present state. What a powerful distinction exists, in their estimation, between a carver in wood and a sculptor of marble! The former may produce the most splendid effects of form and grouping; but what share of the public applause does his skill obtain compared with an inferior production in marble? The one is considered as a mere mechanic in art,—the other is looked up to as the professional acquirement. It is important that the public taste should be so instructed as to banish these false distinctions,—that they should be taught to look at a work, judge of its merits, and award their approbation, without regard to the nature of the material. This can only be effected by convincing the public, by examples, that there are difficulties to overcome, and talent required in the practice of any department, however inferior its application may at first sight appear; and that perfection can only be attained by persevering industry and constant study. May not the present state of the useful arts be traced to the fact, that a young man entering upon this practice, ambitious and desirous of fame, soon discovers that no praise, no *felix*, is awarded to their productions; and to obtain this he must bend his mind to the ideal? May we not also trace to this want of discriminating judgment, the complaint that is made by the professors of high art,—of the want of patronage for their efforts? It is not likely, or to be anticipated, that the public,—whose estimation is regulated by comparison,—if they cannot appreciate beauty in the things of necessity and common use, can have a mind sufficiently alive to the beautiful in those creations of fancy which are beautiful only to the educated eye. Extensive patronage must not be anticipated for the ideal art, until the useful is more generally appreciated. The industrial arts must be made the means not only of educating the public taste, but of teaching the elements of art to those who would soar to its highest end. How could such a course depreciate the practice of high art, or render its

\* A paper read at a conversazione held at the Royal Institution, Monday, November 25th, J. W. Fraser, Esq., in the chair, and repeated, by request, at a public meeting at the Athenæum, Saturday, November 30th, R. Cobden, M.P., in the chair, by George Jackson, honorary secretary, Manchester School of Design. In connection with the Government schools, Somerset House, London. Printed by request of the council.